

Last Sunday afternoon, Christchurch Cathedral was filled to capacity for the Enthronement of Archbishop Michel Jackson . At the beginning of the Service, in a ceremony that dates back to medieval times the new Archbishop approaches the Cathedral and knocks on the door. Archbishop Michael veritably struck the door of Christchurch Cathedral with his pastoral staff and the sound reverberated around the Cathedral. I turned to Rev Martha Waller, Curate of Raheny and remarked, ‘That sounds like a man who means business.’ That sense of purpose ran through the whole of that service: in his invitation to Archbishop Martin not only to attend but also to read the Gospel; his decision not just to invite the representatives of other Christian Churches but also leaders of the Jewish and Islamic communities in Dublin. It also came through in the sermon he preached that day.

In a ceremony firmly rooted in the traditions of the Church of Ireland, the Archbishop began:

Flexibility is the companion of tradition, although it does not often come across like that. We must, of course, show appropriate respect for the good things which become ours through inheritance. Yet we cannot simply maintain those things as if their very maintenance is an end in itself and, therefore, constitutes a job well done. In each generation, it is our responsibility to bring the tradition forward to a new place, to make of it a fresh expression of God’s presence and God’s power, living and working with quite different people and in quite new situations. In this way, the tradition develops the confidence to act in ways appropriate to changed and changing circumstances. This it must do with sure confidence if it is to be a tradition for our time.

The tradition of the Church of Ireland is a living plant, with its roots in our history, growing and developing towards the future. As a young Bishop of Derry & Raphoe, the then Bishop Robin Eames said, in the Priorities Report,

published by the General Synod in the late 1970's: 'Tradition is the servant of the Church not its master'.

Each generation of the Church both receives the tradition and puts its own stamp on that tradition. This is a process that every generation engages in. We see it in the line of editions of the Prayer Book from the original Prayer Book of 1549 down to our current Prayer Book of 2004. We see it in our development of hymnody from the first hymnbooks down to our current hymn book. But these are all continuing processes of taking the best of the past and combining it with the best of each generation. The Liturgical Committee of the Church of Ireland has for example produced a new order for Holy Communion for use when there are a number of children present which we used for the first time on Easter Day. The Church has also announced the beginning of a process of producing a supplement for our current hymn book, whose content was finalised over ten years ago that will reflect some of the developments since that date. Those of you who attended the workshop conducted by John Bell will have experienced some of the new material he produced. It is also recognised that the current hymn book does not have reflect the wealth of good quality material that has been produced for young children such as is used in the Burrow National School Assemblies.

The Archbishop while stressing the need for the tradition to speak to each generation also warns against ignoring the riches of that tradition. So later on in his sermon he says:

St John's Gospel shows us something else, that tradition does not and cannot perpetuate itself on its own terms. It must be subjected to changing circumstances and give an

account of itself for the greater good.Kicking over the tradition indiscriminately and uncritically, however, is far from helpful – to yourself or indeed to anyone else. It leads to repetitive immaturity.

And so I have often said that I have never seen myself as changing the tradition of any Parish I have been in as broadening it.

The Parish Development Programme in which we participated sees as one of its functions as encouraging this dialogue between the tradition and our contemporary situation. How do we communicate, how do we express the unchanging values of the Gospel in our own generation? In a very different social context, how do we express and experience community in an era of 24 hour news, in an era when the work place (for those who have one) is far more stressed, in an era of social networks such as Facebook that have made community a far more fragile and ill defined concept. This is the era in which young families are raising their children, in which our children are growing up. The Church ignores these developments at its peril.

In five years we will be celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Consecration of our Parish Church of St Mary. It was a Church built for its time, reflecting many of the social, theological and liturgical norms of its day. It predated the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, the foundation of this State. When it was built the wife was legally a chatel of her husband, women had no role in politics, in the Church, in medicine and the other professions. It was an age of deference. We would have sung the words of Mrs Alexander, ‘the rich man in his castle the poor man at his gate, God gave them each their station and ordered

their estate'. The side door of the Church did not access a Parish Centre but was rather the door through which the family of the Earl of Howth entered and left the Church. Your Rector would have been a member of the gentry, not the son of an engineering apprentice in the Austin car works in Birmingham.

As we approach that date we need to not only look at the external fabric of our Church building but, of even greater importance, we need to reflect on the very nature of the Church itself, how we use our building, how we express our worship, how we develop our sense of community, community with each other, community with God.

I would ask you to share with me between now and 2016 in this dialogue between the tradition we have inherited and the evolving situation in which we find ourselves called to witness to the Gospel in the time and place in which God has placed us.

As is customary, I want to thank a number of people who have served the Parish over the last year. I thank the outgoing Church Wardens, Mrs Irene Collier, who has served for two years as Rector's Church Warden, and Mrs Finola Young, who has served as People's Church Warden, a position she has filled this position for two years.

I would like to thank the outgoing Select Vestry for their continued commitment. I would like to thank two individuals for their particular ongoing contribution. I speak of Carolyn for her continuing service as Secretary of our Select Vestry and Tadhg for his services as Treasurer. In the midst of very

heavy professional commitments Tadhg has continued to provide very clear and professional advice as we have sought to steer ourselves through these troubled financial times. Carolyn has filled the position of Secretary for a number of years and has been on the Select Vestry since the time of Canon Blennerhassett. She has indicated to me that she would value a chance to step back from both these positions for a while. We will have an opportunity to express our gratitude but I want to take this opportunity to express my own thanks for all the hard work and total commitment to everything she has undertaken in service of the Parish and the wider Church.

Concerns regarding fabric have now shifted from the Rectory to our Church building. We have been seeing a regular slippage of slates which is to be anticipated in a building of this age. Before undertaking a major refurbishment, the Vestry decided to begin the process of making financial preparations for this project. Over this last year we have established a specific Roof Fund and several people have already begun to make regular contributions in addition to a number of generous lump sum donations. The whole process was kicked off by Finola completing the women's mini marathon. There has since been a concert organised by Brenda Alexander and her team. Shirley Moon has secured the services for a concert by 3rd Day Chorale in November and we will shortly see stationary designed by Herbert Alexander being offered for sale. Donations at Baptisms and Weddings now go to the Church Roof Fund.

This year our Glebe Wardens, Frank Macnamara and Eddie Kerr have been heavily committed to a programme of redecoration of the interior of the

Church. Beginning with a replacement of the ceilings of the side aisles they have overseen the repainting of the interior and all would agree that the Church is now a lot warmer and looks in better shape than it has for a long time.

I would like to thank Randal Henly for his continued service as both Organist and Editor of the Parish Magazine. I would like to thank him and the choir for the lead they give us in our Sunday worship and also the work that goes into our special services at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Randal continues to put a great deal of energy into the production of the Parish Magazine. I would at the same time like to thank the team of helpers who assemble and distribute the magazine. This year has seen the launching of the Parish Website. I would like to thank Naimh Hopkins for the work she put into designing the website and Adele Sleator for overseeing this project on behalf of the Vestry.

I want to pay a particular tribute to the Sunday School Team. Cathy Fennell and Ellen Lennon have given tremendous service over the last three years in providing a programme of activities for our Sunday School and of course two remarkable Nativity Plays as well as a development in our Family Services. Their level of commitment, their enthusiasm and simple 'can do' attitude has been wonderful to see. They have indicated that they now wished to step back from this work and I want to take this opportunity of thanking them for all that they have contributed to the Parish and to the young people over this period.

Since the last Easter Vestry, we have seen the appointment of Stephen Byford as our Youth Worker in succession to Shaz Basdeo. We have been fortunate to secure the services of two such talented individuals as our first two youth

workers. Stephen has come to us with his own wealth of experience in 3 Rock, the Dublin Diocesan Youth Organisation and has been heavily involved in the establishment of Youth Clubs in the Parish. It has been a real joy to see these clubs developing as the young people have responded to his leadership. He has also offered assistance in the work of the Sunday School and in the delivery of Family Services. I have really enjoyed working with him in the delivery of our Confirmation Classes. He deserves our continued support and encouragement in all that he is doing with our young people. I would want to pay particular tribute to Louise Fuller in the work she has done in overseeing and encouraging Stephen in this work. The establishment of a post of Youth Worker has long been a dream for Louise and she has put a huge commitment into ensuring that it yields results. Louise has also been responsible for the establishment and running of our Parent and Toddler Group which meets every Thursday from 9:30 till 12 and there is also a lovely atmosphere in the Joshua Room.

At the other end of the age spectrum we have witnessed the establishment of a very successful Social Group that meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons. One Tuesday a month the activities are based here in the Parish Centre and on the other Tuesday the group have organised a trip. These trips have included visits to Dail Eireann, the National Gallery, the Abbey Theatre and the cinema. Barbara Sargent has been very active in the establishment and the running of this group. She would now like to step back so we are looking for someone to step forward.

For a number of years Tom Stanley has faithfully operated the Free Will Offering Scheme. He has now taken a well earned retirement and he has been succeeded by Mr Denis Headon.

I would like to thank Cathy Fennell for her continued work in managing our Parish Centre. She has been very proactive in securing tenants so we have maintained our income from bookings. I would also like to thank Jane Caldwell for the quiet efficiency with which she maintains all the necessary supplies for the Parish Centre

For the last three years the Parish Fete has been under the very capable stewardship of Mrs Helen McVeigh and she has kindly agreed to take responsibility for it this year. Derek Fennell has again been working alongside her.

An important aspect of our life is fellowship, whether in Church or out of Church. I would like to thank some people in particular. I would like to thank Dorothy MacCann for her continued work with the midweek coffee – this is a lovely opportunity for people to get together for worship and fellowship and chat over a cup of coffee. The coffee after Church each Sunday has been particularly appreciated by those new to the Parish, providing as it does a chance to meet and establish contact with people in a way you cannot do on your way out of the Church door. Thankyou to Valerie for coordinating this and to the ladies who have taken on the job of serving it each Sunday.

Each Sunday as you come into Church, apart from Advent and Lent, you will see floral arrangements in the sanctuary. At Harvest, Christmas and Easter the flowers flow over into the main body of the Church. This does not happen by accident. I want to thank all who provide flowers in the Church, but I would want to pay particular thanks to Fiona Henderson for work in coordinating all this.

For a number of years the Garden of Remembrance was administered by Mr Alistair MacMillan who sadly died very suddenly earlier this year. I would hope to be able to announce a successor in the near future. Thanks also to my Stanley McMullen for coordinating the distribution of the Diocesan Review and also to Mr Eddie Kerr for looking after the Church of Ireland Gazette.

Anyone who visits St Mary's will comment on the beauty of our grounds. I would like to thank two people in particular in this regard. Derek Fennell, in his usual cheerful manner, oversees the cutting of the grass. Then there is Mary Downes who coordinates a group who assemble once a month for two hours on a Saturday morning to tidy up flower beds etc. There is a great atmosphere at this and Mary provides wonderful home baking and flasks of tea and coffee.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful work done by our cleaner, Marita. She really is a gem and we are very fortunate to have her.

In the past twelve months I have conducted ...13 Baptisms and 2 marriages. I also conducted 12 funerals I am pleased to announce that Mrs Shirely Moon

has kindly agreed to act as my Church Warden for the coming year. Mr Eddie Kerr has also agreed to continue to act as Rector's Glebe Warden